1: Cooper E-4 (no date) 1946 SHS Tehuelche SHS
Patagonia SH 1

THE PATAGONIAN AND PAMPEAN HUNTERS

By John M. Cooper

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The section of the Pampa which here interests us (map 1, *Nos. 1D, 1E, 1F;* map 2) extends about 600 miles (960 km.) north to south from about a line between Córdoba and the mouth of the La Plata to a line between the Río Colorado and the Río Negro (pl. 3, *bottom, right;* pl. 4, *top, left*), where Patagonia begins, and thence stretches about 1,000 miles (1,600 km.) from north to south to the Strait of Magellan and the isthmus connecting Brunswick Peninsula with the mainland. The Pampa is a low-lying plain, nowhere over 1,000 feet (305 m.) above sea level, except for the Sierra del Tandil and Sierra de la Ventana in southern Buenos Aires Province. Apart from the low coastal belt, Patagonia is mostly a broken tableland, one to five thousand feet above sea level (pls. 1 and 2).

Average temperatures at Buenos Aires, near the northeastern limit of the Pampa, are 48.9° F. in July, the coldest month, and 73.6° in January, the warmest month; at Choele-Choel, near the border line between the Pampa and Patagonia, 45.1° and 73.4°; at Santa Cruz, in far southern Patagonia, 35.2° and 50.6° (cf. New York City, 30.6° in January and 73.5° in July). The Pampa is marked by frequent steady-blowing high winds; Patagonia, by still more frequent blustery *violent winds from the west and southwest.*

The eastern, or Humid Pampa, is, or was, treeless grassland (pl. 3, *top, right,* and *bottom, left;* pl. 4, *top, right*); the western or Dry Pampa (pl. 3, *top, left*), xerophytic scrub-tree and bush land; most of Patagonia has cover largely like that of the Dry Pampa, but considerable grassland especially in the western part. Along the piedmont and eastern slopes of the Andean Cordillera flanking the Pampa and Patagonia to the west, is a broken forest belt (pl. 4, *bottom, left* and *right*), constituting an extension of the Antarctic flora with its beeches and other characteristic trees and shrubs. (For fuller details on environment, cf.: Jones, 1930; James, 1942.)

Of the land fauna, the most important from the native standpoint were the guanaco (*Lama glama guanicoe:* Cabrera and Yepes, 1940,

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'Is not the wild life the best?' But English readers, who have derived their idea of a Pampa from Head's delightful work, or from other experiences of the unlimited grassy or thistle-covered plains which roll away for miles in the Argentine States, and offer no obstruction to the stretching gallop of the untiring gaucho, must not transfer that pleasing picture to Patagonia. The Pampas, properly so called, of Patagonia, occasionally indeed present a tolerably even and uniform succession of rolling plains covered with coarse grass, but more frequently the surface, even when unbroken by hills and suddenly yawning ravines, is sterile, with a sparse vegetation, consisting of stunted bushes and round thistle clumps; and even these are often wanting, and nothing clothes the bare patches of clay or gravel; elsewhere it is strewn with huge round boulders, and again rugged with confused heaps or ridges of bare sharp-edged rocks, many of them of volcanic origin: this more particularly applying to the northern part of the country. The only uniformity of appearance is afforded in the winter, when the white sheet of snow covers rocks, grass, and shingle; but one accompaniment is the same, whatever be the nature of the soil or surface; and the word Pampa invariably recalls to one's shuddering memory the cutting blasts which sweep almost without intermission from various points, but chiefly from the west, over the high country, till, reaching the heated atmosphere of Buenos Ayres, the cold Patagonian wind becomes the Pampero, the sudden and terrific blasts of which cause so many disasters among the shipping. The descent from these Pampas to the valleys, or more sheltered and fertile level ground bordering the banks of the streams and rivers, is commonly termed 'Barranca,' or bank, from the scarped slopes, varying in depth from fifty to two or three feet, and in angle from an easy to an almost perpendicular descent, but often fissured by ravines or gullies, affording roads, down all of which, however, the native riders gallop with equal recklessness.

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but, as is often the custom, left the slain animals concealed in bushes, with a poncho or something over them. During the interval of our absence severe weather set in, and on returning to examine our *caches* the foxes and birds of prey had accounted for the meat. The foxes are a great trouble to the hunters, as, frequently, whilst they are encircling the herds of guanaco, and taking the greatest care to keep out of sight, one of these brutes will jump up, the dogs give chase, and then good-bye to all chance of sport. Fitzroy remarked the number of guanaco bones found in his ascent of the river Santa Cruz, which appear to have puzzled him, but the cause is not far to seek. During the very severe winters which occur I believe about once in three years, these animals, finding no pasture on the high lands, which are covered with snow, are necessarily driven down to the plains fringing the river, where they die from starvation. There is also a disease prevalent amongst them something similar to scab in sheep. On one occasion a hunting party killed ten guanacos, all of which were scabby, or, as we called it, 'sanoso;' and, consequently, unfit for food. Mr. Clarke told me that after one severe winter he found ostriches lying in heaps, dead under the bushes, and also guanacos. The difficulty of getting the horses across the swift and deep stream, with its banks encumbered by ice, prevented us from making frequent excursions to the northern side of the river. A level plain extends from the banks for about a mile, bounded by a chain of irregular hills; near the foot of these I picked up many specimens of a spiral shell, apparently a Turritella, which appeared to have been vitrified; and some were as translucent as glass, and of different colours. Beyond these hills rolled a succession of uneven plains diversified by ridges and hills; the general slope of the ground being apparently from west to east, and the hills towards the west often assumed the form of abrupt lofty cliffs. Near a laguna at the foot of a cliff a hundred feet high I found boulders incrusted with sulphate of iron, such as had been

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with us towards the boat, following the river bank, which was strewn in many places with cornelians and flint-agates, and occasionally with fossilised shells. On our arrival at the boat we launched her down the beach, and as the wind had by this time risen to a severe gale and the tide was rapidly ebbing, watched anxiously for the return of the two defaulters; for the navigation of the river is at no time very easy, and when the tide is low, even in daylight, nearly impracticable. At length, after dark, when the squalls of bitterly-cold wind had become very violent, we saw fires in the distance, and almost half an hour afterwards our missing men appeared, each with a load of meat on his shoulders. They arrived considerably exhausted, so we gave them a rest, and then dogs and all got into the boat, and we shoved off, Mr. Clarke steering. We proceeded all right for a few yards, and then struck on a bank; after several ineffectual efforts to shove the boat off, we all jumped into the water and fairly hove her over the bank until the water was up nearly to our shoulders, and then got in and pulled across. Owing to the violence of the wind and the strength of the current, we only succeeded in landing fully three-quarters of a mile from the house; here we secured the boat, and ran up as fast as we could to get our now frozen clothes off and a drink of hot coffee. We all agreed that on another expedition it would be advisable either to encamp on the northern shore until daylight, or come back early enough to be able to get across while it was possible to see the banks. But the general conclusion was not to go again at all.

132 The weather in July was intensely cold, the lowest reading of the thermometer, which was duly examined every morning, being 8°. Washing our clothes became impossible, as during the process the water froze and the garments became stiff as boards. When crossing the ford, if the potro boots of the rider happened, as was not unfrequently the case, to get filled with water, in a few minutes not only were the boots coated with ice, but the inside resembled an ice-pail.

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The effect of the river ice piled up on the shore by the tides was very striking. Huge floes had accumulated to the height of fifteen feet and upwards, and besides rendering the passage difficult, had buried the carefully-stacked wood-pile under a small mountain of ice. This was in the comparatively sheltered valley. On the Pampas, when the fierce south wind blew, as it almost invariably did, it seemed impossible to face it and live. One attempt made nearly resulted in Gonzalez being overcome by the sleep which is the forerunner of death, and the horses of all the party absolutely could not advance. The snow lay eighteen inches deep, and we had flattered ourselves that the guanaco and ostrich would prove an easy prey. *They* could not run—but *we* could not chase, and were thankful to make our way, slowly and laboriously, down from the desolate and storm-swept Pampas.

The Indians from the Rio Chico occasionally visited us, and Orkeke's objection to my company was gradually giving way. He had probably feared that an English Señor would require a considerable amount of attention, and give constant trouble; but during our intercourse he found that the stranger could (and did) groom his own horse, and wait on himself generally, as well as take his part in whatever was being done, even to sleeping out with no shelter but the ample guanaco mantle. Casimiro also, according to promise, visited the camp, and argued in my favour, finally obtaining from the chief a somewhat reluctant permission for me to join his party. Towards the end of July some of his Indians had come to the settlement to inform us that the scarcity of game in their vicinity had compelled them to shift their quarters to a place higher up the Rio Chico. They anxiously inquired if the schooner had arrived; we were as eagerly looking for her, but day after day passed, and the looked-for boat did not appear.

On the 24th of July everybody had gone hunting, except Juan Chileno (who was cook for the week), and myself, whom a hurt received in my foot had compelled to remain

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routine of hunting, as we made our way slowly up the valley of the Rio Chico, which was still frozen over. The weather was cold, and occasional showers of snow accompanied the strong piercing westerly winds which blew every day. The valley sometimes opened out into wide grass-covered plains, dotted with incense-bushes, then rose again in huge bare ridge and furrow-like undulations. Occasionally there occurred patches of swampy ground with frozen lagoons, and here and there open springs, the resort of numerous waterfowl. The hills on the northern side appeared bare and rugged, rising abruptly out of irregular forms, while the southern heights were lower, and presented more of the steep declivities known as barrancas, interrupted at intervals by high rugged hills of basalt, often assuming the appearance of ruined castles, closing in at the bends of the winding river. To one of these—a remarkable hill under which we were encamped on August 28, about 120 miles from Santa Cruz—I gave the name of Sierra Ventana, from a window-like opening through its peak; the Indians called it Mówaish. (See Illustration.) In many places the bases of these hills were formed entirely of a description of lava, and one of the Chilians informed me that whilst passing over a ridge, he had observed [illegible] of pure iron: this, however, I was inclined to disbelieve, as although farther up the country iron ore exists in large quantities, I only observed in this part a species of ore similar to that common at Drobak, in Norway.

On one occasion, while marching, we observed smoke in our rear, which was thought to be caused either by a messenger in search of us announcing the arrival of the schooner, or else by a party of the Southern Indians who had some idea of marching north. However, no scout was sent back to discover the truth, so we remained in ignorance. On the 26th we halted, and encamped by the side of the river in a broad opening of the valley; here there was a lagoon, not completely frozen, in which grew a description of flag, of

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heavily up; and shortly about twenty or thirty more spread 224
their huge wings, sailed away, and perched on a neighbour-
ing rock. As for the guanaco in the short half hour of my
absence it had been literally to n to pieces; so, after extract-
ing and eating the marrow-bo es, we returned to camp, on
our way capturing two armadil os. During the past day or 132 ●
two the temperature had consid rably risen; the wind, though
westerly, was mild and genial, nd the Indians affirmed that
farther north it would be so arm that I should require
some covering for the head. We found on our return that 000
Arica during our absence had one off somewhere on foot.
As he had that morning asked and obtained some tobacco
from me, it seemed probable hat he had determined to
attempt to make his way alone o reach civilisation at some
point or other. During our tay in this valley Casimiro 202
requested me to write a letter r him to the commandante
at the Rio Negro, inquiring wh ther the Argentine Govern-
ment still allowed him his rati and pay as a lieut.-colonel
in their service. I also wrote some letters to my friends,
but without much hope of the r being 'mailed;' though
Casimiro assured me that whe we joined the Northern
Indians they would forward the n to the Araucanos, whence
they might go on by the people w o went to Rio Negro to fetch
[illegible]; remote, however, as were
all these contingencies, still it was a pleasure to write. We 133
quitted the valley after three days' rest, during which Arica
had not appeared, and he was concluded either to have fallen
a prey to a puma, or to have gone off on his own account. We
journeyed all day over a rough hilly country, encumbered with
large stones and occasional patches of scrub of considerable
height; ostriches abounded, and large quantities of eggs
were found. During a long march of about thirty miles no
water was seen until we reached the camp at sunset, situated
in a cañon; but along the route an occasional patch of snow
sufficed to quench our thirst. As I rode along in company 521
with an Indian named 'Tchang,' he began asking me ques-

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started to hunt, but came back shortly almost empty-handed, fairly beaten by the driving sleet and snow. During our stay most of us had refitted all our gear, and were well provided with bolas; many were the necks of guanaco stripped to obtain the hide for them, and for making 'manéos' (straps for securing horses' legs), whips, cinctas (girths), lazos, &c., &c. The work that I preferred was plaiting ostrich sinews for thongs for the ostrich bolas. The ostrich sinews are abstracted by dislocating the lower joint of the leg, the first sinew is then pulled out by hand, and the other drawn out by main force, using the leg bone as a handle. This bone is then separated from the foot, and the sinews left adhering to the foot; they are slightly dried in the sun, after which the extracted bone is used to separate the fibres by drawing it sharply up the sinews. When sufficiently separated, they are cut off from the foot, split into equal sizes and lengths, and laid in a moist place to soften; when sufficiently soft, they are made into thongs, cooked brains being used to make them more pliable, and lie better in the plaits. These thongs are plaited in four plaits (round sinnet) well known to every sailor, but the ends are doubled in a peculiar manner, which requires practice to manage well. Before leaving Chiriq another disturbance was nearly taking place, caused by one of the Chilians quitting Tchang's toldo and joining that of a man commonly called Santa Cruz, an Indian well known at Patagones, and allowed a ration of mares from the Government. Tchang, immediately on hearing of his departure, put on his revolver and collared the Chilian's horse. To this Santa Cruz objected, but Tchang kept the horse, and, revolver in hand, defied anybody's claim to it. After this little incident the camp was broken up, and the two parties divided—Hinchel marching S.W. and our party to the N.W.

After a very cold and hungry march in the face of a bitterly piercing wind, we encamped on the shores of a lagoon of some extent, called 'Hosbelkaik,' which signifies 'Windy-

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hill,' and certainly is worthy of its name; for during our stay 132
a succession of S.W. winds blew with great violence. After
our arrival a small boy cut his finger, and, according to 752
custom, a mare was killed. Some of the meat sent to our
toldo was thankfully received, as we were all half starved.
Having strolled through the camp and visited Cayuke's toldo, 800
I found that Casimiro had not arrived, having started, to my
great disgust, with the party travelling to the S.W., and
taken with him a specially good horse, which he had given
me in exchange for a revolver. I was, however, glad to find
that Jackechan, the Pampa chief, was there, and we had a
confabulation and smoke together. On the 23rd, the pre- 224
vious day having been too rough, the Indians started to
hunt the enclosing grassy basin before mentioned as existing
at the foot of the mountains. Immense herds of guanaco
were driven down, and being encircled by men and fires the
sport soon commenced. The Tehuelches had for some reasons
set light to the grass in every available part, and the wind
rising to a furious gale, the fires soon spread and joined in an
advancing line. Jackechan, myself, and several other Indians
were in the centre of the circle, each employed in skinning
the guanaco we had already killed, when suddenly we found
that we were encircled in flame and smoke, and that if we did
not want to be well scorched we had better look out for means
of exit. Leaving our game, we galloped at the spot where
the smoke appeared thinnest, but after riding three or four
minutes with our faces covered up, found an impassable
barrier of flame; so, half-maddened with the hot sand dashed
in our eyes by the gale, and nearly suffocated with smoke, we
galloped down the line of flame to a spot where, the grass
being stunted, we managed to get through without injury,
although our horses' legs were singed a little. We were very
thankful to breathe pure air, though the atmosphere was still
thick with smoke, and nothing could be distinguished of
valley or anything else. Jackechan, with unerring Indian
instinct, led the way to a stream of water, where we were

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able to drink and wash some of the hot sand out of our eyes. After a quarter of an hour's rest and a smoke, as the flames had passed on, we determined to ride back over the still smoking ground, and endeavour to discover the bodies of our guanaco. We accordingly emerged from the hollow where we had sheltered ourselves, and once more plunged into the thick of the driving smoke and heated sand: holding our mantles over our eyes, we penetrated the murky atmosphere till Jackechan discovered two of his animals; but as they were both roasted, or rather burned, and ourselves and horses were nearly suffocated, we beat a hasty retreat. I was very thankful when at length, ascending a steep declivity, we emerged at the top into the pure air. 'Ah!' said Jackechan, looking down on the plains still full of smoke, 'it has been a rough time, but "we are men, not women," though we were fools to remain to the last.' I fully agreed with him in this, as my eyes still smarted very painfully. How he found his way through the smoke was perfectly inexplicable to me: if I had been alone, my travels would have been concluded then and there. Towards the evening of this eventful day the wind abated in violence, and during the night snow fell, and all the ensuing day there were passing squalls of white water or snow, and furious blasts of wind. About this time I came to the conclusion that summer was unknown in these regions, and that the Patagonian year consisted of two seasons—a hard winter and a bad spring. The Indians, however, declared that the climate had grown colder during the last two years. On the 28th of November we broke up camp and marched to a valley situated under one spur of the wooded hills, previously mentioned as bounding the northern side of the valley—killing some young guanaco by the way. I was astonished on galloping up to two, to find they did not run away at first, although their mothers had already gone, and taken up a position on a rocky eminence some distance off. Whilst watching them, however, and meditating on the necessity and cruelty of killing them, the two little things

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feet in height, when we looked down on a broad plain in the form of a triangle, bounded by the river flowing through the ravine on the north side, and on the southern by another coming from the south, which two streams united in one large river at the western apex, at a distance of about perhaps a league. Above and around, on all sides excepting to the west and the ravines through which the rivers flowed, rose the unbroken wall of the lofty mountains of the Cordillera, many of their peaks snow-clad. No sound was to be heard except the rushing of the river in the ravine, and no animal life to be seen except a condor or two floating high above us in the clear sky. The scene was sublime, and I viewed it in silence for some minutes, till the pipe, being handed to me, dispelled all nascent poetic tendencies. The Indians remained silent and looked disgusted, as a herd of cattle had been expected to be viewed on the plain below. We descended to the flats, and crossed the river, on the banks of which 'Paja' or Pampa-grass grew in abundance, as well as the bamboo-like canes from which Araucanian Indians make their lance shafts, and a plant called by the Chilians 'Talka,' the stalk of which, resembling rhubarb, is refreshing and juicy. On the northern edges and slope of the ravine behind us towered graceful pines sixty feet high, which, though an impassable barrier of rock prevented close inspection, appeared to be a species of Araucaria; the bark was imbricated and the stems rose bare of branches for two-thirds of their height, like those figured by M. Gay. Many had been carried down by landslips, and lay tossed and entangled on the sides of the ravine. The increase of temperature after passing the watershed was sensibly great, amounting to from seven to ten degrees, and the vegetation far more luxuriant, the plants presenting many new forms unknown at the eastern side. After leaving the plain and crossing the shallow stream, we left our mantles, and girthed up near a tree in a thicket festooned with a beautiful creeper, having a bell-shaped flower of violet radiated with brown. The

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137 We remained some days in this place, and whilst hunting
in the surrounding country (where horses abounded), we ob-
served a new description of spinous shrub with small ovate
leaves and yellow flowers, resembling holly, and growing to
about two feet in height. Casimiro and myself agreed to try
757 whether the leaves might not be medicinal, so a quantity were
bruised and boiled: the infusion proved exceedingly bitter,
reminding me of quinine, and acted as an admirable sudorific,
being administered to the invalids with great success. In
133 one of our excursions we had crossed the hills and descended
on a high elevated plain, concluding our hunt near a swell-
ing eminence exactly resembling a huge 'barrow' thickly
overgrown with shrubs, from which what appeared to be a
calling was espied, to our great delight. Hinchel and myself
being alone, and having a fat ostrich to discuss for dinner,
determined to enjoy our meal by its shore, first testing the
quality of the salt, a luxury which we had long been desti-
tute of. Dismounting, we proceeded to investigate it; but
to our great disappointment, after walking over every part of
[36] it, and digging down with knives a foot below the surface, the
supposed salt proved to be bitter and nauseous nitrate of soda.

132 After quitting the vicinity of the Cordillera the weather
had every day become warmer, and the frosts at night much
lighter: indeed whilst in Teick some warm days were ex-
perienced, although the winter season was fast approaching.
137 Near this encampment the small edible root previously de-
scribed as growing in the dried-up lagoons was found in
abundance, and was collected by the women and children.

[36] Cavies were plentiful in the hollows and valleys in the
neighbouring hills, and even close to the encampment, but
the chase of other game proved difficult, the hill sides being
so strewn with stones as to render galloping a horse a
777 certainty of laming him. In this neighbourhood Hinchel
pointed out a detached pinnacle of rock, much resembling
that noticed at Geylum, and according to custom invoked a
135 blessing from the guardian spirit; and then he informed me

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had been further diminished by several deaths. One of this day's victims to the epidemic being Algo, Tankelow's youngest daughter, the father was in great distress and anger, as he attributed the death not to the distemper, but to witchcraft. /65 [76]

The warm and tolerably fine weather experienced since our departure from Telck had been succeeded by a heavy, murky, still atmosphere, and the clouded sky promised a downfall of rain, which speedily came. The next day more children and the old deaf and dumb woman died; over her little moan was made, but the lamentations over the children were terrible to hear, and on all sides mares were slaughtered. The abundance of meat, and the general confusion, combined with the rain to defeat Cazimiro's anxious desire to proceed. The accumulation of miseries had rendered all the Indians gloomy and ill-humoured; and since our departure from Geylum we had had ample experience of the wretched side of Pampa life. /32 /65 /52

This district is always dreaded by the Indians, who assert that they invariably are attacked by a similar sickness when in it, notwithstanding that some considered it to have been occasioned by poison or deleterious drugs administered by our late neighbours. The marches had therefore been forced and prolonged, and the increased fatigue had doubtless aided the distemper in its fatal effects. Nearly half the children and several of the elder people died during our progress to Margenaho, and the utter misery and discomfort cannot be described. The rain had continually drenched us; the women, distracted with their endeavours to soothe the sick children, and their grief over the dead, could not attend to their domestic duties; our mantles were unmended, and proved but a poor shelter from the rain, no small misery in this climate, and the arrangements of the toldos were utterly devoid of their customary care and comfort. The usual good temper and cheerfulness of all had fled, and grief, sickness, and angry suspicion cast a gloom over every countenance, /64 /65 /52

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One misery, starvation, had certainly been avoided by the abundance of horse-flesh, but it can easily be imagined that we could have borne hunger better. We had endured cold, and hunger, and fatigue, as well as danger, before, but nothing has left so indelible an impression of a thoroughly bad time as that march from Geylum to Margenaho.

At last Casimiro issued orders to march, and with two or three more of us started in advance. While waiting under the shelter of a mass of rocks for the remainder to overtake us, I fell asleep, and on waking up found the rain pouring down in torrents, and the chief just directing Mefia to return and see what the women were about. Our page arrived a little later to say that the Indians had refused to march, the occupants of our toldo alone being on their way to join us: these soon appeared, so we proceeded in the storm, having agreed that to return, after having once started, would be an ignominious proceeding.

We followed for some distance the valley, or rather the plain, into which it had opened out, and then ascended some abrupt rocky heights at its eastern extremity; crossing these hills, in the valleys or ravines of which incense bushes grew almost like a forest, we halted for a time by the side of a rivulet flowing from a spring on the hill side.

After kindling a fire to warm our bodies, wet as we were and chilled by the wind, which, originally west, now blew from the south with cutting violence, the sight of numerous guanaco on the heights above determined us to encircle a herd; we accordingly mounted the heights, and having completely failed in our attempt, descended to the other side. A large lagoon lay at our feet, and away to the east a succession of plains extended to the encampment called Margenaho.

These plains were bounded for a short distance on the north side by a range of hills, which came to an abrupt termination at the end of the lagoon, on the south side by another range gradually sloping to the eastward, and on the

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western side by the rocky heights we were descending. The[53]
view would have been enjoyable on a fine day, but in such
a Patagonian tempest of rain and wind, landscapes were by
no means appreciated. Near the lagoon was another herd
of guanaco, some three thousand strong, who tempted us to
a vain endeavour to encircle them, but they deserted us
before we could approach within a mile, and were soon lost
to sight on the plains leading towards Margonsho. Whilst
riding down the edge of the hills Casimiro pointed out some[57]
thyme, a little of which we gathered to flavour our soup
with in the evening. We then descended, and sheltered
under the overhanging bank of a dry watercourse leading
to the lagoon. The women and remainder of the cavalcade
shortly arrived, and loading my page with firewood, to his
intense disgust and the extreme delight of every one else,
we proceeded a little farther to the south, where the pasture
was good, and established ourselves for the night.

The following morning early we all started to hunt, and[32]
were more successful than on the previous day, though the
wind was blowing a fearful gale from the S.W., with occa-
sional storms of sleet. Towards the afternoon, by which
time, having finished our hunting, we were snug enough
under the toldo, it rained hard, and with the rain the Indians
commenced to arrive, till before dusk a town of toldos
occupied the borders of the hills.

Casimiro this evening sent for volunteers to go in with[44]
me as messengers or chasquis to Patagones, on our arrival
at Margonsho, now but one march distant. But of those
previously so desirous to go on, not one appeared, nor
would any one Indian consent to lend his horses for so long
a journey. The chieftain was sadly put out, and cursed the
cacique all round. He then tried to dissuade me from
going myself, saying that it was a great distance, that the
desert or travesia was a fearful place, that I should probably
lose my horses, that many people had starved, at the same
time wishing me to lend my horses to some other Indian.

5: Bourne T-5 (1849)1874
SH5 Tehuelche SH5

The climate is severe. The Rio Negro forms the northern boundary, and nearly the whole country is south of the parallel of 40° south latitude. At the time of my capture, which was in the month of May, the weather corresponded to that of November in the New England States. Its chilliness, however, was greatly increased by the bleak winds of that exposed locality. Along the Straits of Magellan the weather is also exceedingly changeable. Sudden and severe squalls, often amounting almost to a hurricane, vex the navigation of the straits, and sweep over the coast with fearful fury.

The habits of the Patagonians, or at least of the tribe among whom I was cast, are migratory, wandering over the country in quest of game, or as their caprice may prompt them. They subsist altogether on the flesh of animals and birds. The guanaco furnishes most of their food, and all their clothing. A mantle of skins, sewed with the sinews of the animals, hung loosely down the back and extending below the knee, is their only article of dress, except in the coldest weather, when a kind of shoe, made of the hind hoof and a portion of the skin above it, serves to protect their inferior extremities.

In person they are large; on first sight, they appear absolutely gigantic. They are taller than any other race I have seen, though it is impossible to give any accurate description. The only standard of measurement I had was my own height, which is about five feet ten inches. I could stand very easily under the arms of many of them, and all the men were at least a head taller than myself. Their average height, I should think, is nearly six and a half feet, and there were specimens that could have been

all the harbors of this coast there is an abundance of birds: both seabirds and amphibious ones, such as ducks, seagulls, cormorants, <u>cherlitos</u>, <u>bandurrias</u>, some <u>ahuacatas</u> and <u>pajaros-niños</u>; there are also some swans, and inland there are partridges, sparrows and some dark colored birds with red breasts; there are also vultures and all kinds of birds of prey. Foxes and black-and-white skunks abound, the urine which the latter give off having the most vile smelling odor imaginable, extending over an enormous area. From the Santa Cruz river south to the Straits there are a few deer.

The climate here is cold, but it keeps to a regular seasonal cycle: it rains but little. The winds usually blow from the north, west or south, and are ordinarily violent and make the region uncomfortable, but they are very healthful.

The Indians in these quarters are all of one nation; they are tall, their height varying from six feet to nine spans for the men, there rarely being any taller than this. The women are not so tall, but are enough so in proportion to their sex. All are handsome, and among the women there are some who are very good-looking and white skinned, although tanned by the wind and sun like the men. There is not to be found a thin man or woman, rather are they all thick-set in proportion to their height, which, combined with their habit of going about enveloped in skins from neck to feet, may possibly have contributed to the reports of travelers that they were giants.

Their language is guttural and they are in the habit of repeating the same word over and over in their conversations. They do not inter-[illegible] day. Ordinarily the speaker is one of greater authority than the others present, or else of greater eloquence. The women do not speak among the men unless questioned, and then they only answer the question. Those who speak often without occasion and insanely are not well considered, and are not even listened to.

The dress of the men is made of guanaco, skunk or hare skins, six feet square, the fur turned inward and the hide painted red, green or yellow. This garment covers them from neck to feet in such a way that only rarely does one see any part of the body other than the arms, and these only when they are in use. They wear also another garment under the outer one, of very soft leather, tied at the waist with a thong, which covers the belly and reaches halfway down the thighs, from which place it tapers to a point which reaches as far as the ankles. Their feet are covered with hide which they secure with thongs; this footgear is of ox hide if they can procure it, and if not, then of the hide of a horse or of a full-grown [i.e., an ox that was colt. - Rosenfeld]